



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY TO HELP FIGHT WILDFIRE
Proclamation Will Aid In Protecting Citizens In Hyde, Tyrrell And Washington Counties

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today is issuing an executive order declaring a state of emergency in Hyde, Tyrrell and Washington counties due to the wildfire that now covers about 30,000 acres (50 square miles), much of it in the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. By issuing the executive order, the governor directs all state and local agencies to deploy necessary resources and personnel to protect the public. In addition, the executive order designates Secretary of Crime Control and Public Safety Bryan Beatty as coordinator of emergency operations to fight the fire and protect the citizens in the area.

“I am activating all available emergency responders and officials at all levels of government to do what we can to make sure this fire is contained and our citizens are safe,” said Easley. “Weather and winds could change and move this fire in unpredictable ways, so I remind all those who live in and around, or travel through, the area to heed all official notices, warnings and road closings.”

The wildfire was sparked by a lightning strike on June 1 in Hyde County and expanded to the north-northeast through the week amid hot, dry conditions and shifting winds. A mandatory evacuation of 39 homes in the Lake Phelps community has been ordered and residents of another 30 to 40 homes on Gall Road in Hyde County were ordered to leave on Thursday. A temporary shelter has been set up at the Ponzer Fire Department. Another shelter at the Belhaven Fire Department was opened late Thursday.

There are currently 160 firefighters on the ground working to contain the blaze from state and local agencies. In addition, there is one large “water bomber” air tanker and three single-engine tanker planes along with three helicopters from federal and state sources to fight the blaze.

Firefighters have been able to contain about 30 percent of the fire, but changing winds have made it difficult to predict how the blaze is moving. Visibility in the area of the fire is severely limited because of smoke. Today the state Division of Forest Resources imposed a ban on all open burning and canceled all burning permits in Hyde, Tyrrell Washington and Beaufort counties.

The weather forecast for the area calls for continued hot conditions with 5 to 10 mile-per-hour winds coming out of the south and southwest. Those winds are expected to remain calm, which will at least